



WASHINGTON STATE
Board of Health
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

DATE: June 13, 2012

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Dr. Diana Yu

SUBJECT: PERTUSSIS BRIEFING

Background and Summary:

Pertussis cases continue to climb quickly in Washington and have reached epidemic levels in some areas of our state. Epidemic means we're seeing more cases than expected. As of June 5, 2012, there were 2,092 cases, compared to only 164 for the same time period last year.

Pertussis (also known as whooping cough) is highly contagious. It causes cold-like symptoms, spreads by coughing and sneezing, and can last for weeks. This disease affects people of all ages but is especially serious for infants who often get the disease from parents, siblings, or caregivers. Four babies have died from whooping cough in our state over the last two years and dozens more have been hospitalized because pertussis makes it difficult for them to breathe, feed, or sleep.

The Department of Health has been devoting a lot of effort to trying to stop this epidemic and to prevent future outbreaks. Today we will have an opportunity to learn more about what the pertussis picture looks like in Washington and what has been put in place to halt its further spread. I have invited Janna Bardi, Manager of the Immunization Program and Chas DeBolt, an epidemiologist who both work at the Department of Health to present on this subject.

Recommended Board Action:

No action needed.